United Nations A/72/791

General Assembly

Distr.: General
14 March 2018

Original: English

Seventy-second session
Agenda item 126
Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

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Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. As global challenges grow increasingly complex, interlinked and transnational, our ability to respond is being tested. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1) provided a robust demonstration of the international community's commitment to join forces to find holistic solutions that transcend borders. The United Nations remains the cornerstone of global cooperation. However, in an environment of eroding confidence in the multilateral system, we need urgently to reinvigorate trust in the Organization, as well as in other global organizations and institutions. National parliaments, through which people may hold their Governments to account, can be pivotal partners in our collective efforts to leave no one behind.

2. Member States have encouraged the growing involvement of parliamentarians and parliamentary organizations in the work of the United Nations. Indeed, there is a recognition that when parliamentarians perform their duties in an inclusive, accountable and effective manner and work closely with the United Nations, it empowers the Organization to work more closely with the people of the world, which in turn facilitates the communication of their concerns and aspirations to the United Nations. This is because parliaments are uniquely placed to promote coherence between national and international agendas. Parliaments can pass legislation that gives effect to international commitments, adopt budgets that advocate for those commitments to be implemented and create accountability for the fulfilment of Governments' pledges to the international community and to their own citizens. The role of parliaments in holding Governments accountable gives them a critical responsibility to help create honest and responsive Governments, which is a priority concern for people around the world.

3. Parliamentary organizations play a leading role in promoting the engagement of parliaments in United Nations processes and activities. The Inter-Parliamentary

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Union (IPU), as the world organization of parliaments, connects national parliaments in order to promote greater transparency, accountability and participation at the global level. Along with other parliamentary organizations, IPU engages with the United Nations on activities that cover a broad range of issues, including peace and security, human rights and sustainable development.

4. The institutional cooperation between the United Nations system and IPU continued to grow during the reporting period. In July 2016, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of IPU signed a new cooperation agreement, updating the original 1996 document and placing the institutional relationship on a stronger and more strategic footing. The new agreement takes stock of developments over the past two decades, provides a platform to strengthen collaboration in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and identifies other priority areas for joint work. Subsequently, in its resolution 70/298 on the interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and IPU, the General Assembly opened the door to new areas of cooperation on a wide range of issues, including disarmament, South-South cooperation and migration.

5. Parliaments and parliamentary organizations played an active role throughout the negotiations on the post-2015 development framework, advocating strongly, for instance, for the inclusion of goals related to democratic governance. Following the finalization of the 2030 Agenda, the focus of cooperation between the United Nations, national parliaments and parliamentary organizations has now firmly shifted towards implementation. As a result, support for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the broader 2030 Agenda forms the organizing principle of the present report. Section II focuses on United Nations direct cooperation with and support for national parliaments in the attainment of the Goals and the 2030 Agenda more broadly; section III describes the cooperation between the United Nations and IPU and other parliamentary organizations; and section IV offers recommendations on the way forward.

II. The United Nations and national parliaments: direct support provided to parliaments and parliamentarians

6. The long history of cooperation between the United Nations system and national parliaments builds on the recognition of the added value and mutual benefits that such partnerships offer across a wide range of mandates and activities. Under the umbrella of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Charter of the United Nations, a range of entities in the United Nations system provide support to national parliaments in a number of ways and on a variety of issues. Some of these interactions are described below, although they do not represent an exhaustive list.

A. General support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

7. Parliaments are pivotal for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This was acknowledged by world leaders in General Assembly resolution 70/1, in paragraph 45 of which the Assembly acknowledged "the essential role of national parliaments through their enactment of legislation and adoption of budgets and their role in ensuring accountability for the effective implementation of our commitments".

8. Parliaments are well placed to promote a holistic vision of the 2030 Agenda and translate this global framework into actionable national policies. As representative

bodies, parliaments can help ensure inclusiveness, accountability and the rule of law, which are integral building blocks of sustainable development. Systematic engagement by parliamentarians requires a concerted and deliberate effort by the executive, legislative and judicial branches. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, a number of countries have created mechanisms to ensure the engagement of their parliaments in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. This has included the use of parliamentary advisory groups, special parliamentary briefings and the inclusion of parliamentarians in implementation review mechanisms. More remains to be done to support the role of parliaments in promoting and reviewing implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

9. Given that parliaments are not merely stakeholders but drivers of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, strengthening the capacity of parliamentarians remains a priority for the United Nations. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the leading provider of technical assistance to parliaments worldwide, currently working with approximately 70 parliaments. The UNDP Strategic Plan for 2018–2021 (DP/2017/38) reaffirms the continued commitment of UNDP to strengthening parliamentary processes and institutions to promote inclusion, transparency and accountability as an integrated part of its efforts to enhance effective, inclusive and accountable governance. During the reporting period, UNDP supported parliaments in developing a strategic plan for holistic parliamentary-owned frameworks for parliamentary reform and strengthening in Benin, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Georgia, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Madagascar, Sao Tomé and Principe, Sierra Leone, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Kosovo.[1] In Ukraine, UNDP provided support to the national parliament and to a European Parliament joint needs assessment mission, which resulted in a comprehensive road map for reform. UNDP also initiated multi-country projects to advance parliamentary action on specific issues, including a project on strengthening technical and functional skills of parliaments in the oversight of public finances that included the establishment of a high-level working group between the parliamentary budget committees of Angola, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Sao Tomé and Principe, and Timor-Leste.

10. In countries where constitutional reform processes are planned or under way, UNDP frequently supports parliaments in managing the impact of such processes on parliamentary roles and responsibilities. This support includes assistance in organizing constitutional deliberations, building and capacitating key support bodies and supporting the drafting of reforms that can provide the foundation for good governance. During the review period, UNDP supported parliaments in Guyana, Liberia, Nepal, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Turkmenistan and Tuvalu in their constitutional reform processes.

11. UNDP has supported national parliaments with specific activities that help raise awareness of parliamentarians' role in the 2030 Agenda, assess institutional fitness for purpose for the Sustainable Development Goals and support parliamentarians to become development champions. In Jordan, Lebanon, Mexico and Serbia, UNDP has supported parliaments to undertake self-assessments of their capacity to contribute to the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda. UNDP has also supported parliaments in the development of cross-party Sustainable Development Goals caucuses, forums or committees in Nepal, Pakistan, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Zimbabwe, and in mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals in existing committees in Georgia, Mexico, Serbia and the United Republic of Tanzania. In November 2017, UNDP, jointly with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), organized a seminar for parliamentarians from the Arab

[1] References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

region to raise awareness of their role in implementing and reviewing progress of the 2030 Agenda at the national level.

B. Support for specific Sustainable Development Goals

12. Beyond providing general support to translate the 2030 Agenda into action, the United Nations and national parliaments have also partnered to advance the implementation of a range of specific Sustainable Development Goals. For instance, in the areas of eradication of poverty and achievement of zero hunger, as reflected in Goals 1 and 2, United Nations entities work with parliaments to anchor policies, programmes and frameworks related to food and nutrition security into legislation. Targeted support by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations to parliamentarians in Latin America and the Caribbean has led to the adoption of more than 20 national laws related to food and nutrition security. The World Bank also engages systematically with parliamentarians on issues related to poverty reduction and agriculture. In October 2017, World Bank experts in Zambia briefed parliamentarians on the role of public expenditure in agriculture as a way to achieve sustainable development, economic diversification and poverty reduction. In Malawi, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) supported the revision of a food and nutrition bill and consulted with parliamentarians on the right to food.

13. Given the role of legislators in ensuring access to health for all, Goal 3 of the 2030 Agenda on good health and well-being represents another significant area of collaboration. During the reporting period, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) supported national parliamentary forums on health in 20 countries. These forums play a critical role in engaging parliamentarians on health rights and development policy issues and in advocating for an effective and sustainable AIDS response. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), meanwhile, organized knowledge-sharing sessions and a series of workshops and conferences with national parliaments around the world to integrate reproductive health into national strategies and programmes.

14. As part of Goal 3, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) provided legislative assistance or legal advice on national draft laws on drug control or penal codes to Bolivia and Peru. UNODC also provided technical guidance to the parliament of Tunisia on a draft law on drugs in 2016. In November 2017, UNODC was invited to address the National Assembly of Ecuador on the international drug control system and on effective measures for the prevention and treatment of drug use disorders.

15. Cooperation with parliaments has also provided excellent opportunities to advance Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. By emphasizing empowerment and a life without violence, this Goal is integral to achieving the overarching vision of the 2030 Agenda of a discrimination-free society. Parliaments are key stakeholders for adopting and implementing normative and policy frameworks on gender equality. During the reporting period, UNFPA aided parliaments in Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan to adopt path-breaking legislation that will help protect millions of women and adolescent girls from harmful practices and strengthen regulations on the prosecution of sexual offenders.

16. UN-Women supported national parliaments around the world in advancing legislation to promote gender equality, including through the provision of capacity-building, technical assistance, advocacy and outreach. UN-Women also continues to engage male parliamentarians, including through the "HeforShe" campaign, which

was launched in several parliaments and commits male parliamentarians to act in support of gender equality and women's empowerment. In Eastern Europe and the Arab region, UN-Women convened regional workshops for parliamentarians to strategize about their role in realizing Goal 5 and integrating a gender lens in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Country-specific workshops for parliamentarians on gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda were held in Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nauru and Rwanda and training sessions were convened for parliamentarians from several Caribbean countries on gender-responsive localization of the Goals. In the Republic of Moldova, UN-Women provided technical support to women parliamentarians to advocate for the adoption of gender-responsive legal reform and the adoption of legal provisions to increase women's political representation.

17. In addition to offering targeted training for women parliamentarians in more than 40 countries, UN-Women also offered dedicated support to strengthen cooperation between women's parliamentary caucuses in Cabo Verde, Colombia and Sri Lanka, working on common issues of women's empowerment. In Rwanda, UN-Women provided technical expertise during the production of a gender-responsive budgeting guide for current and future parliamentarians and supported a community outreach programme to raise awareness on issues affecting gender equality and women's rights. Violence against women in politics, an issue highlighted by a 2016 IPU study,[2] is another key area of engagement for UN-Women. Joint activities with parliamentarians were held in Bolivia and Mexico to raise awareness and advance legislative reforms in this area.

18. Gender equality is central to the work of with parliaments and includes building the capacity of female parliamentarians and women caucuses, as well as supporting the strengthening of gender-sensitive law-making and budgeting. During the reporting period, targeted capacity-building activities were provided in several countries, including Myanmar and Ukraine. In the Central African Republic and Moldova, UNDP worked with OHCHR and UN-Women to engage with the National Assembly to assist in the adoption of gender equality laws.

19. Given the centrality of human rights to women's empowerment, OHCHR continued to directly engage with a number of national parliaments in pursuit of gender equality. Implementing recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the universal periodic reviews of the Human Rights Council is a key objective in this regard. In Madagascar, for instance, booklets with information on the work of the Committee and the universal periodic reviews were provided to female parliamentarians. The OHCHR Regional Office for Central America is engaged in an ongoing dialogue with the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador to advocate for legislative reform of sexual and reproductive rights. In Mauritania, OHCHR worked with parliamentary groups on human rights and gender and jointly organized discussions to ensure the alignment of legislation on discrimination and gender-based violence with international human rights standards.

20. Issues of land management and women's access to and control over land are significant enablers of the gender equality agenda. To that end, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), through the African Land Policy Centre, continued to raise awareness among African parliamentarians of the nature and scope of women's land tenure insecurity and to emphasize the need to mainstream these concerns into

[2] See https://www.ipu.org/news/press-releases/2016-10/ipu-study-reveals-widespread-sexism-harassment-and-violence-against-women-mps.

land-governance mechanisms. In Mexico, UN-Women supported parliamentarians in including a gender perspective on land-related legislation.

21. A targeted effort was made to increase the number and capacity of women parliamentarians in Somalia. Efforts by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), UNDP, UN-Women and the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, among others, were instrumental in securing a high level of women participation in the 2016 electoral process. Although the target of 30 per cent of seats for women was not met, the proportion of women parliamentarians in the new parliament increased from 14 to 24 per cent. The special political missions of the Department of Political Affairs in countries such as Iraq and Libya advocated for the inclusion of more women in leadership and decision-making positions. In 2016, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya facilitated the first meeting between women members of the Libyan House of Representatives and women parliamentarians from neighbouring countries to exchange knowledge regarding the role of women lawmakers in national reconciliation, peacebuilding, dialogue and negotiation mechanisms.

22. United Nations support under Sustainable Development Goal 11 builds on the recognition of the role of parliaments in the prevention of natural disasters. In this regard, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), through its Parliamentarian Initiative, intensified efforts to support lawmakers in the understanding and implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The initiative aims to ensure a coherent approach between the implementation of the Sendai Framework, the 2030 Agenda (in particular those Sustainable Development Goals that are directly connected to the Sendai Framework through common indicators) and the Paris Climate Agreement. With the support of UNISDR, Nepal in 2017 endorsed the prevention-focused Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act. Policy frameworks and plans for disaster risk reduction were also developed in Myanmar, India and Fiji.

23. In the area of climate action under Sustainable Development Goal 13, United Nations support has contributed to the ongoing enactment of national climate legislation. A recent study of 164 countries found that more than 1,200 climate laws were in place in 2017, compared with about 60 climate laws in 1997.[3] During the reporting period, UNDP supported parliamentary initiatives on climate action in a number of countries. In Pakistan, Nepal and Bhutan, UNDP provided targeted support such as training and development of tools to assist parliamentarians in enhancing their knowledge of climate change and climate budgeting. In Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal, UNDP assisted women in engaging in parliamentary work on their countries' energy policies, thus linking the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 13.

24. Sustainable Development Goal 15, on life on land, identifies issues such as deforestation and desertification as major challenges to sustainable development. During the reporting period, ECA, through the African Land Policy Centre, continued to work with national parliaments to raise awareness among parliamentarians of land-related issues, especially large-scale investments. In Colombia, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) has been working with municipal parliamentarians in Bogotá on land use and a territorial master plan for the city. Similarly, UN-Habitat provided technical support to parliamentarians in Mexico during their discussion on land-use laws.

[3] See Michal Nachmany and others, *Global Trends in Climate Change Legislation and Litigation* (Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and Environment, Columbia Law School, Centre for Climate Change Economics and Policy, and IPU, 2017).

25. With Sustainable Development Goal 16, the 2030 Agenda broke new ground as the first international compact that recognizes the importance of effective, inclusive and accountable institutions for development. This has strengthened the role of parliaments as core legislative, oversight and representative institutions and makes them critical partners for United Nations efforts on peace and justice. Beyond the role of parliaments in the implementation and oversight of the 2030 Agenda, targets 16.6 and 16.7 also call upon parliaments to pay special attention to their own institutional development and their capacity to promote social cohesion and sustain peace. UNDP has continued to assist parliaments in strengthening their institutional capacity and to assist parliamentarians in building their capacity to perform the core parliamentary functions of representation, law-making and oversight and to carry out their role in the national budget process — all essential activities for parliaments to deliver successfully on Goal 16.

26. To that end, support provided to institutional capacity-building included the boosting of research capacity in Lesotho and assisting the Iraq legislature in institutionalizing the work of parliamentary committees. UNDP continued to support parliaments' efforts to strengthen representation in countries such as Bhutan, Chile, Laos, Kyrgyzstan, Madagascar and Papua New Guinea. In Bhutan, UNDP has supported the scaling up of the Virtual Zomdu programme, a platform allowing parliamentarians to connect with remote communities via videoconferencing, enabling public participation and the addressing of issues in real time. UNDP has assisted the building of parliamentary capacity in reviewing, drafting and revising laws in countries such as Afghanistan, Bolivia, Côte d'Ivoire, Serbia, South Africa and Tunisia.

27. The engagement of parliamentarians can form a critical aspect of United Nations support for building inclusive and peaceful societies under Sustainable Development Goal 16. To that end, the Department of Political Affairs, primarily through a number of peace operations under its supervision, provides direct technical support to parliaments in a number of countries. In Somalia, for instance, UNSOM, jointly with UNDP, continued to work closely with the Federal Parliament on State-building priorities, particularly the process to revise the Provisional Federal Constitution. In Afghanistan, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan regularly interacts with the Wolesi Jirga, the lower house of the National Assembly, in particular to support the parliamentary Human Rights and Judicial Committees in the drafting of legislation and the translation of supporting materials.

28. Engagement with parliaments has also been central to the efforts of the Department of Political Affairs in mediating the crisis in Libya, where the Libyan Political Agreement was largely drafted by representatives of the legislature. In Iraq, the focus of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) has been to provide technical assistance to parliamentary committees and to undertake a facilitation role between political blocs as well as between individual members of parliament. In addition to UNAMI, other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes strengthened their cooperation with Iraqi parliamentarians as well, covering issues such as security sector reform, water scarcity and informal settlements. UNDP assisted in the drafting of by-laws to strengthen the oversight function of the Security and Defence Committee, while ESCWA organized a workshop in December 2016 for Iraqi national and local lawmakers on internally displaced persons and refugees. In the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, UNDP and the Department of Political Affairs provided targeted training for the House of Representatives and helped upgrade its physical infrastructure through the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund. Support also included technical advice to the drafting of a charter to establish the Bougainville Referendum Commission and to a recently established peace implementation forum on issues

related to the operationalization of the Bougainville Peace Agreement. The United Nations Integrated Office in Guinea-Bissau, meanwhile, continued to provide capacity-building support to the Organizing Commission of the National Conference established by the National Assembly, including specialized training workshops and visits to Côte d'Ivoire and Timor-Leste to exchange views on experiences in national dialogue and reconciliation.

29. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has worked closely with a number of national parliaments on draft legislation to improve the situation of internally displaced persons and to secure solutions to internal displacement. In Ukraine, for example, UNHCR supported parliamentarians on a draft law to delink access to social assistance programmes in non-government controlled areas from the registration of internally displaced persons.

30. By virtue of their mandate to adopt comprehensive legislation and facilitate inclusive decision-making processes, parliaments possess an ability to help prevent conditions conducive to the rise of violent extremism and to ensure that legislation to combat terrorism is comprehensive and compliant with relevant international norms and standards. This makes them key partners for the United Nations in combating and preventing terrorism under Sustainable Development Goal 16. In this regard, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), in the course of its dialogue with Member States and regional organizations, as well as during assessment visits, routinely interacts with national parliamentary bodies. This includes sensitizing parliamentarians on the interrelation between the rule of law and development, raising awareness of global norms and standards on combating terrorism and identifying ways for parliaments to enhance Governments' ability to combat terrorism while respecting human rights.

31. In the fight against organized crime, corruption, crime prevention and criminal justice, UNODC has provided technical support to a number of parliaments. In support of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, legislative assistance was delivered to Afghanistan and Viet Nam in 2016 and pre-ratification or pre-accession assistance was provided to Fiji and Japan in 2016/17. Similarly, UNDP in Côte d'Ivoire facilitated dialogue between parliament, civil society and the executive branch to combat corruption and strengthen institutions and good governance. In Guinea-Bissau, UNDP supported the parliament in drafting and producing the country's first parliamentary ethics handbook. In Madagascar, UNDP and other partners jointly supported the development of a parliamentarians' action guide for the fight against corruption to build capacity for parliamentary anti-corruption action.

32. Support for regional solutions to build peaceful and inclusive societies underpins the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. In line with General Assembly resolution 70/298, the Committee continues to engage members of the Palestinian Legislative Council and the Israeli Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean to work towards a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to raise awareness of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories.

33. With respect to global partnerships under Sustainable Development Goal 17, the World Bank has traditionally been a strong partner of parliaments, both as a funding partner and as a source of knowledge and information. Besides organizing regular visits for parliamentarians to project sites, the World Bank runs a capacity-building programme that has so far trained over 10,000 parliamentarians on ways to enhance the oversight role of parliament, especially regarding policy implementation and the use of public funds. Department of Economic and Social Affairs has been another

strategic partner supporting the inclusion of parliaments in national development cooperation forums and related processes.

C. Themes contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda: Sustaining peace, democracy, governance and human rights

34. The concept of sustaining peace, which emerged from the landmark 2016 resolutions on the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture (General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016)), cuts across the entire 2030 Agenda. While sustainable development is an end in itself, it provides at the same time the best foundation for durable peace. The promotion of democracy, good governance and human rights are central elements of both sustaining peace and the 2030 Agenda. Parliaments carry out important oversight functions and are essential for building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions capable of supporting democracy and human rights. As the inclusive and representative entities to which Governments must be accountable, parliaments are provided with support by UNDP on institutional reforms and legislative and administrative processes.

35. UNDP and the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) have worked with parliaments to enhance participatory mechanisms and to improve parliamentary communication and outreach activities with a view to making parliament more accessible to constituents. In Tunisia, UNDEF advocated with parliamentarians to reform the legal framework of local democracy and increase citizen participation. In Cabo Verde, UNDP assisted the parliament in developing an action plan for parliamentary openness, while it supported Ukraine in developing a new parliamentary communications strategy. In 2017, together with the Open Government Partnership and other partners, UNDP supported the parliament of Ukraine in hosting the second Global Legislative Openness Conference.

36. In the area of human rights, parliaments have a responsibility to provide legal protection through national laws and to ensure that the laws passed are compatible with human rights standards. In this regard, OHCHR works with national parliaments in three main areas: technical assistance, capacity-building and advocacy initiatives. During the reporting period, OHCHR regional offices in Africa, Central Asia, the Pacific and the Americas worked with national parliaments towards the ratification of human rights treaties and the implementation of recommendations emanating from human rights mechanisms. In Guinea, OHCHR organized a sensitization and information session for parliamentarians on key concepts and mechanisms of the transitional justice process and provided legal advice during the review, elaboration and adoption of penal and civil laws. In Ethiopia and Georgia, OHCHR built the capacity of parliamentarians to comply with national obligations under human rights monitoring and reporting frameworks. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Joint Human Rights Office of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the national human rights commission worked with parliamentarians towards adopting a law for the protection of human rights defenders.

37. Other United Nations entities engaged with parliaments on human rights issues as well. In July 2017, UNDP organized, jointly with IPU, a first seminar on human rights in the Myanmar parliament, attended by 350 lawmakers. In Albania, UNDP worked with parliamentary committees to ensure compliance with constitutional amendments reflecting commitments under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In Zambia, UNDP worked with partners to build the capacity of members of parliament and communities to monitor access to economic, social and

cultural rights and to audit public infrastructure accessibility for persons with disability.

III. The United Nations, parliamentary organizations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union: implementing the 2030 Agenda and advancing global norms

38. Parliamentary organizations are a key vehicle for supporting the implementation of global commitments at the country level both by strengthening the capacity of parliaments to carry out their legislative, oversight and representative roles and by providing them with relevant information on United Nations operations and decision-making processes. With a membership of 178 national parliaments and with institutional ties to all the major regional parliamentary assemblies in the world, IPU is an international organization with global reach and high-level convening power. In its resolution 70/298, the General Assembly encourages the United Nations and IPU to continue to work closely in various fields, in particular peace and security, economic and social development, climate change, international law, human rights and gender issues, democracy and good governance. The IPU Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs is the central structure designed to enhance the United Nations-IPU partnership.

39. Beyond IPU, the United Nations system works with a range of international, regional and subregional parliamentary organizations and associations. Work with regional organizations and alliances often focuses on specialized areas such as health, women's empowerment and disaster prevention, where these parliamentary organizations are well positioned to channel the views of parliaments and their members directly into United Nations processes.

A. Support for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

40. IPU and other parliamentary organizations play an important role in building the capacity of parliamentarians and mobilizing political support among them for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Parliamentary participation in regional and subregional frameworks can facilitate the effective translation of sustainable development policies into concrete action at the national level. To that end, the IPU Strategy for 2017–2021 is designed to ensure the highest possible engagement by the global parliamentary community on implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. On the margins of the 2016 and 2017 editions of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, IPU held side events for parliamentarians to take stock of parliamentary action on the Goals, including towards mainstreaming them in their legislative and oversight work. IPU also organized 10 regional seminars on the 2030 Agenda, which were attended by senior parliamentarians as well as United Nations officials.

41. With a particular focus on Sustainable Development Goal 2 on ending hunger, the IPU secretariat and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs worked to promote parliamentary action on food security and proper mitigation measures against famine and drought. To that end, an emergency resolution was adopted at the 136th IPU Assembly, held in Dhaka in April 2017.

42. Good health and well-being, enshrined under Sustainable Development Goal 3, remains an important area of collaboration between the United Nations and parliamentary organizations. In 2016 and 2017, on the margins of the sixty-ninth and

seventieth World Health Assemblies, IPU and the World Health Organization co-organized meetings on the role of parliamentarians in bridging the gap between evidence and health policy and on parliaments as key actors in promoting access to health for all. To continue the fight against HIV/AIDS, IPU and UNAIDS also organized a side event during the General Assembly's 2016 High-level Meeting on Ending AIDS, highlighting the role of national parliaments and IPU in helping to end the epidemic.

43. In support of Sustainable Development Goal 5, IPU continued its efforts to promote gender equality and empower women and girls through country projects and workshops. In November 2016, IPU, UN-Women and the Committee on Equal Opportunity for Women and Men of the Parliament of Turkey organized a training workshop for women parliamentarians on leadership, communications and media relations. At the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in March 2017, IPU and UN-Women jointly held a full-day side event for 200 parliamentarians on the economic empowerment of women. IPU participated in the sixty-fourth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, at which an IPU/CEDAW working group identified ways to enhance cooperation and advance the engagement of members of parliament in implementing the Convention. In March 2018, the annual IPU/UN-Women parliamentary meeting held during the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women focused on empowering rural women and girls.

44. UNFPA continued to work with parliamentary organizations to uphold girls' rights and end harmful practices, including female genital mutilation and child marriage. In October 2017, jointly with the Pan African Parliamentarians, the Fund organized a regional conference, which recommended actions to ensure that appropriate laws are adopted and enforced, funds are allocated, governmental institutions are accountable and communities are aware of gender inequality and harmful practices.

45. With respect to Sustainable Development Goal 11, UNISDR works closely with a number of regional parliamentary networks to raise awareness and foster information exchange on legislation regarding disaster risk management. Engagement with parliamentarians from the East African Community (EAC) led to the passing and implementation of the EAC Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act, the first such regional legislation adopted in Africa. The engagement of UNISDR with the European Parliament led to the adoption of a resolution in June 2017 that embeds the Sendai Framework in European Union foreign policy priorities.

46. The joint IPU/United Nations annual parliamentary hearing, typically used to prepare a parliamentary contribution into major United Nations processes, focused on the high-level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, held in New York in 2017. Parliamentarians, United Nations officials, ambassadors and experts discussed the interconnections between Goal 14 and other Goals, such as taking action to combat climate change (Goal 13), ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns (Goal 12) and ending hunger and achieving food security (Goal 2), among others, and presented recommendations targeting a range of stakeholders.

47. Implementation of Goal 16 on promoting peace, justice and strong institutions remains a centrepiece of United Nations collaboration with parliamentary organizations. UNDP and IPU continued their joint provision of assistance to a number of parliaments, including in Georgia and Fiji. In Myanmar, following elections held in November 2016, IPU and UNDP supported induction programmes for over 700 national, regional and state Members of Parliament.

48. Among the central concerns related to Goal 16 is the joint development of strategies for peaceful conflict resolution and activities to prevent terrorism and violent extremism. The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) consistently engages with parliamentary associations in an effort to strengthen mutual respect among peoples of different cultural and religious identities and to reject extremism and embrace diversity. IPU and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean are members of the Group of Friends of UNAOC and attend all its high-level meetings. IPU also actively participated in Geneva Peace Week 2016 and 2017, co-organizing events on the contribution of parliaments to sustainable peace and the impact of societal inequality on sustainable peace.

49. UNODC and IPU deepened their strategic collaboration and, in close cooperation with CTED, launched a joint initiative on the role of parliaments in preventing and combating terrorism. In February 2017, UNODC and IPU in Egypt jointly convened a regional workshop for parliamentarians on the challenges posed by extremism leading to terrorism and preventive criminal justice responses. UNODC also supports the newly established IPU High-level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism in providing a global parliamentary focal point for legislative work on combating terrorism and preventing violent extremism. The work of UNODC with other parliamentary organizations included the co-organization, with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), of the March 2017 regional conference on legislative measures and national plans of action to prevent terrorism and violent extremism. Support for parliamentary organizations is also provided by CTED, which interacts regularly with IPU and PAM, including on the incorporation of offences under international instruments to combat terrorism into domestic law and the development of comprehensive and integrated strategies to combat terrorism.

50. In line with Sustainable Development Goal 17, parliamentary organizations also remained active in promoting the role of parliaments in strengthening global partnerships for sustainable development. In December 2016, for example, with the support of UNDP and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, IPU organized two side events during the second high-level meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation to reflect on the main capacity-building needs of parliaments. During the reporting period, UNDP also supported IPU in organizing regional exchanges of parliamentarians in Africa and Asia to facilitate regional knowledge-sharing on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

51. In support of the trade-related indicators of Goal 17, the World Trade Organization (WTO) continued to maintain an open dialogue with parliamentary organizations to help develop a deeper understanding of parliamentarians' role in the multilateral trading system. In this vein, WTO regularly interacts with IPU and participates in the annual parliamentary conferences on WTO organized jointly by IPU and the European Parliament.

B. Themes contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda: sustaining peace, youth, democracy and human rights

52. At the invitation of the IPU Standing Committee on Peace and International Security, the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office participated in the 137th IPU Assembly, held in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, in October 2017, during a session on sustaining peace as a vehicle for sustainable development. The session served to prepare a draft resolution on sustaining peace for discussion at the 138th IPU Assembly, to be held in Geneva in March 2018.

53. To strengthen democratic and inclusive governance, IPU actively promotes and monitors the representation of youth in national parliaments.[4] In collaboration with UNDP and the Parliament of Sri Lanka, IPU convened a regional meeting of young parliamentarians in April 2017 to discuss their role in advancing inclusive and peaceful societies and preventing violent extremism. At the annual youth forum of the Economic and Social Council, meanwhile, the co-organizing United Nations entities and IPU have ensured the consistent participation of young parliamentarians. The Forum has become one of the most institutionalized avenues at the United Nations for engaging young people and for promoting their critical involvement in the implementation of global agendas and commitments. In November 2017, IPU convened the Fourth Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians in Ottawa, Canada. Representatives of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNAIDS participated, while the United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth and the President of the General Assembly delivered video messages on young parliamentarians as drivers of inclusion. Members of the IPU Forum of Young Parliamentarians were also actively involved in the Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, which was organized by OHCHR in November 2016 and focused on ways to increase youth participation in political decision-making.

54. Throughout the reporting period, IPU and other parliamentary organizations continued their contribution to strengthening democracy and promoting and protecting human rights around the world. A key objective is enhancing the contribution of parliaments to the work of the Human Rights Council and to the implementation of its universal periodic review recommendations. To that end, OHCHR and IPU co-organized a panel discussion on the margins of the thirty-fourth session of the Human Rights Council, in 2016. In addition, in response to a request by the Council at its thirty-fifth session, IPU and OHCHR are preparing a study, to be issued in June 2018, on how to enhance synergies between parliaments and the Council as well as the universal periodic reviews. To further strengthen the cooperation of parliaments with international human rights bodies and promote their contribution to the implementation of universal periodic review recommendations, OHCHR, UNDP and partner networks organized a regional conference in Fiji in November 2016.

C. Collaboration on humanitarian assistance and information and communication technology

55. Cooperation between the United Nations, IPU and other parliamentary organizations covers a wide range of areas beyond those directly related to the 2030 Agenda. With respect to humanitarian aid, OCHA has increased engagement with parliamentary organizations, in particular with IPU. In response to requests from parliamentary delegations to organize an emergency debate on the Rohingya situation during the 137th IPU Assembly, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs gave a briefing on the situation on the ground as well as the funding requirements and imminent pledge conference. A resolution was adopted which called upon the Government of Myanmar to end immediately the violence and forced displacement of the Rohingya people and called upon parliaments to support the humanitarian response in Myanmar and Bangladesh. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, meanwhile, has interacted with parliaments and parliamentary bodies where rights of Palestine refugees are a priority and where Member States have a stake in the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

[4] See IPU, Youth participation in national parliaments, 2016 (Geneva, 2016).

56. IPU and other parliamentary organizations continued to examine how modern information and communication technologies can support parliamentarians in the effective execution of their duties. To that end, in June 2016, IPU, UNDP and other partners co-organized the World e-Parliament Conference in Valparaiso, Chile. The Conference provided a forum to discuss how technology can help to improve representation, law-making and oversight and to increase the openness, accessibility, accountability and effectiveness of parliaments. *The World e-Parliament Report 2016*, which focused on the transformative effect of technology in making parliaments more transparent and accessible, was launched at the Conference.

D. Development of tools and knowledge products

57. To support the systematic and wide-ranging collaboration between the United Nations, parliaments and parliamentary organizations, guidance materials continued to be developed over the reporting period.

58. A key output for UNDP and IPU was the second edition of the *Global Parliamentary Report*, which was jointly produced and launched at the 137th IPU Assembly. The *Report* seeks to provide a basis for parliamentarians to review their performance in exercising oversight functions. Other significant products include the UNDP/IPU self-assessment toolkit for parliamentarians on their role in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and a handbook on the role of parliaments in implementing the Goals that was jointly produced by UNDP, the Islamic Development Bank and the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption. Together, these products assist parliaments in analysing national gaps and subsequently designing and implementing concerted action to support country-wide realization of the 2030 Agenda.

59. A range of other tools were jointly developed by United Nations entities and parliamentary organizations. The online platform AGORA,[5] developed by UNDP, the World Bank Group and other partners, is a one-stop hub for knowledge-sharing on parliamentary development among parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, civil society and the wider parliamentary community of practice. In 2016, OHCHR and IPU released a revised version of the popular *Human Rights: Handbook for Parliamentarians*, which had originally been issued in 2005. In addition, UNDP and Parliamentarians for Global Action published guidance for parliamentarians on human rights and the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersexual people in 2017. UN-Women has been active in the production of new tools as well. In March 2017, on the margins of the sixty-first session of the Commission of the Status of Women, UN-Women and IPU jointly launched a new edition of the IPU/UN-Women global map of women in politics.[6] In the Caribbean, in 2017 UN-Women and the independent pan-American network of parliamentarians (ParlAmericas) launched "ParlTools", an interactive, online learning portal for parliamentarians in the region. In November 2017, IPU, UN-Women, UNDP and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance relaunched the website "iKNOW Politics", an online platform that supports the participation and effectiveness of women in political life.

60. On economic policy, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Group jointly established a network that connects more than 1,500 parliamentarians. The network provides a platform for dialogue, information-sharing and advocacy for increased accountability and transparency in development cooperation. ILO and IPU, meanwhile, have continued their partnership in the area of the ratification and

[5] https://www.agora-parl.org/.

[6] https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/infographics/2017-03/women-in-politics-2017.

implementation of international legal instruments to safeguard fundamental principles and rights at work. A jointly released handbook for parliamentarians on the topic of forced labour is expected to be completed in April 2018.

E. Partnerships and senior-level interactions

61. Efforts to enhance strategic interactions between the United Nations and parliamentary organizations, including through the development of partnership agreements and regular senior-level interactions, have continued. The signing in July 2016 of a new cooperation agreement between the United Nations Secretary-General and the IPU Secretary-General set the stage for agreement on other, more tailored partnerships. For instance, UNDP, IPU and other partners jointly developed a set of common principles for providing support to parliaments, which aim to enhance inter-agency cooperation and coordination for more effective delivery of parliamentary support. IPU and UNDP are also in the process of finalizing a new memorandum of understanding.

62. A recent United Nations/IPU agreement to hold annual senior leadership meetings will further systematize these partnerships. The IPU Secretary-General and the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General co-chaired the second such meeting in November 2017. Discussions helped identify further opportunities at the national and global levels.

63. During the reporting period, parliamentary organizations maintained their engagement in various high-level United Nations meetings, from the General Assembly to the Economic and Social Council, the Human Rights Council and beyond. In support of the United Nations process for a global compact for migration, for instance, the President of IPU led a delegation to a United Nations-hosted stocktaking meeting, held in December 2017 in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. Migration was also at the centre of the 2018 United Nations/IPU parliamentary hearing, held in New York in February 2018, in which some 200 parliamentarians participated along with high-level representatives of the United Nations and Member States. Moreover, as a sign of the shared commitment to improving global health, the President of IPU joined the United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Advisory Group for Every Woman Every Child and the Secretary-General of IPU is a member of the Lead Group of the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement.

64. United Nations senior officials, in return, regularly participated in meetings organized by IPU and other parliamentary organizations. The semi-annual IPU assemblies continue to represent an excellent opportunity for strategic engagement given the high-level representation of nearly all of the world's parliaments. On the occasion of the 136th IPU Assembly, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs delivered a keynote speech and met with members of the IPU Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs to discuss opportunities for the collaborative strengthening of host-country parliaments. Similarly, the Executive Director of UNODC addressed the 137th IPU Assembly.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

65. The present report provides an overview of the scope of interaction between the United Nations and the parliamentary community over the past two years. Cooperation at the global, regional and national levels touches on virtually all policy areas and extends across political to operational engagements. I strongly believe that continuous strengthening of this partnership will be vital to inclusive and accountable implementation of our global multi-stakeholder agendas.

66. Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals will remain at the centre of United Nations cooperation with parliaments and parliamentary organizations. Translating this ambitious framework into actionable national policies requires a concerted, whole-of-society effort. The heart of the 2030 Agenda is an inclusive process that must integrate people at every stage from initial policy design to implementation and monitoring. The parliamentary community has the tools to make this happen and the United Nations is committed to continuing its support.

67. In order to further strengthen their partnership, the United Nations and parliamentary bodies need to address several challenges. The tightening fiscal environment routinely proves a stumbling block to the implementation of joint programmes and projects, making it ever more important to identify synergies and complementary advantages. Where the capacity of record-keeping and maintenance is not fully developed, there are particular risks of loss of institutional knowledge associated with turnover of members of parliament following elections. The relatively short duration of parliamentary sessions in some countries may also complicate the alignment of assistance with national processes and requires United Nations entities to synchronize project and funding cycles with parliamentary sessions.

68. **To strengthen the partnership between the United Nations system and the parliamentary community, I reiterate my commitment to continue working with Member States, parliamentary organizations, civil society and other actors to deepen existing partnerships and increase the number of countries in which support is provided to national parliaments to develop their capacity to implement and monitor the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Agenda for Action, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. This should include support to:**

(a) **Assess parliamentary readiness for the Sustainable Development Goals and identify strategies, mechanisms and partnerships to support effective implementation of the Goals;**

(b) **Accelerate the building of capacity to perform the core parliamentary functions of representation, law-making and oversight;**

(c) **Review budgets and the regulatory framework to facilitate increased investment in the implementation of the Goals;**

(d) **Ensure timely and adequate provision of development and humanitarian assistance;**

(e) **Strengthen domestic awareness of the Goals, champion specific sustainable development issues and accelerate progress towards reaching those furthest behind;**

(f) **Ensure greater parliamentary engagement in Sustainable Development Goals accountability processes, including in voluntary national reviews at the national level and at the High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development.**

69. **The United Nations system and IPU, together with other partner organizations, should intensify efforts to assist parliaments in fulfilling their oversight role in the promotion and protection of human rights, including their role in the implementation of the recommendations emerging from the universal periodic review process of the Human Rights Council.**

70. **The United Nations system and IPU, together with other partner organizations, should increase support to national parliaments in raising awareness of, and combating violence against, women in politics.**

71. **The United Nations system and IPU, together with other partners organizations, should support national parliaments in leveraging their unique position as representative bodies with legal, political and social legitimacy for conflict prevention, including by ensuring inclusive legislation and engaging in constructive dialogue with communities. I call upon parliamentarians around the world to seize opportunities for conflict prevention and to prioritize these issues in their deliberations.**

72. **The United Nations system should take further steps to advance more coherent and structured engagement in working with parliaments and parliamentary organizations at the country and global levels. In its major reports and strategies, the United Nations should more systematically reflect the role of parliaments in addressing the global issues of our time.**

73. **Under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General, the United Nations is committed to holding both a senior leadership meeting and working-level meetings with IPU on an annual basis. This dialogue is critical in ensuring strategic alignment between the two organizations and their development and political priorities.**

74. **Finally, at this time of complex and interlinked global challenges, I urge intergovernmental bodies, regional forums and the international community to ensure the active engagement of parliaments and parliamentarians in their work in order to strengthen the voice of the people in global decision-making processes.**